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**LT. GOVERNOR SKILLMAN UNVEILS LATEST STATEWIDE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE**

*“Breaking the Boundaries” will spur economic growth in
all rural communities*

Today Lieutenant Governor Becky Skillman introduced the latest statewide economic development initiative. “Breaking the Boundaries,” a strategy for rural Indiana, aims to encourage and boost economic growth for rural Hoosiers. Skillman kicks off a three-day tour across the state to introduce and roll out the plan. Joining her in the announcement is the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs and the Indiana Rural Development Council.

“This administration is an administration of action. Since the beginning, we have pledged to continue economic development of rural Indiana,” said Lt. Governor Becky Skillman. “As a native of small-town Indiana, rural development has been my passion. When I first sought to develop an inclusive, statewide strategy for our small towns and rural areas, I received overwhelming assistance and support throughout the state. This plan will bring economic growth back through the dedication of those who call rural Indiana home.”

In 2005, Lt. Governor Skillman initiated an effort to create a vision and strategic framework for rural Indiana’s future. The result was the Rural Indiana Strategy for Excellence: A 2020 Vision for the Indiana Countryside (RISE 2020), the first of its kind in the nation. The framework of RISE 2020 was developed by more than 650 Hoosiers representing the broad diversity of institutions, organizations, governments and constituencies of our state. Indiana aspires to be a national leader and model in how such an inclusive strategy can be achieved.

RISE 2020 serves as the foundation for Breaking the Boundaries, the strategic plan of Indiana's Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA).

"The foundation of a successful rural Indiana is the people who live in, work in, or love rural Indiana." said David Terrell, Executive Director of OCRA. "Yet it is not enough for the people to stand individually. We must unite in our work for rural Indiana. Only by coming together for the good of rural communities, we will see that good becomes great."

OCRA has committed its resources to helping communities address the goals set forth in the strategic plan. To start, OCRA has developed two grant programs: one to encourage Rural Entrepreneurial Support, and one to foster Workforce and Education Development. Communities can receive up to \$150,000 to support rural and community level entrepreneurial projects or to tackle community-specific workforce training and educational needs. OCRA also has dedicated funds to encouraging micro-enterprise projects, health facilities and youth centers, and to improving water and sewer systems.

In conjunction with OCRA and Breaking the Boundaries is the newly-formed Hoosier Rising Star Award, which honors outstanding youth who call rural Indiana home. This award – open to all rural Indiana students, from kindergarten through high school seniors – will honor those who are making a difference in their rural communities.

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Legislation, passed by the 2005 General Assembly, created the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs. Lt. Governor Becky Skillman was appointed as the first ever Secretary of Agriculture and Rural Development for the state of Indiana. This is the first time in history that the state is making rural Indiana a major focus. For additional information on OCRA and its programs visit their Web site at www.in.gov/ocra.